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THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS

FOR THE

RURAL SCHOOLS

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The Training of Teachers for Rural Schools

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The rural school problem is the greatest question among educational leaders of all countries at the present time. It is the problem par excellence in America and appeals with peculiar forcefulness to the people of those states where agriculture is the main industry. Briefly it is this: How can the rural school contribute to the welfare of the state proportionate to the demands which the state makes upon it? What kind of school plant and equipment is necessary for its efficiency? How can its course of study revitalize and redirect its energies? How may the instruction be carried on so that country life may be idealized, new standards of efficiency and of happiness be placed before its constituency and the mainstay of our industrial system be conserved? How may the schools be unified, graded and properly supervised? And last of all but the greatest of all is the question of the spirit, the training, the tenure and the numerical adequacy of its teachers.

IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

ENGLAND. In England, agricultural colleges and the university departments furnish the Head Masters and the Training of Science Masters for rural pupil-teacher centers, where teachers-in-the-making pursue a two year course in science, manual arts and methods, after completing the work of the rural secondary school. Many of the training colleges maintain courses peculiarly adapted to the needs of rural education. Mr. Symonds' report to the Board of Education for 1908, states that since the Local Taxation Act of 1890, much has been done by many of the county councils to afford

teachers of rural schools the opportunity of training in rural subjects. He recommends the establishment of summer schools of rural science for the training of teachers in the application of science to rural life and occupation.

NEW SOUTH WALES. Mr. Board, the Director of Education for New South Wales, says: "Students in the Teachers' College in this state during their first year have practice in teaching and for the purpose of their practical training in the management of small schools, spend a portion of their time at a specially conducted and equipped school under one teacher for observation work. This school is situated in one of the near suburbs of Sidney and the teacher in charge has been selected on account of his efficiency in the organization and management of a one-teacher school."

CANADA. The McDonald movement in Canada has aroused a new interest in rural education and its possibilities in relation to farm industries. Ontario provides special teachers' training courses in elementary agriculture, horticulture and industrial arts in the Agricultural College at Guelph. Special courses are offered in the Normal and Model schools. Special grants of from \$200 to \$750 are given to country and village schools maintaining household and manual training, under regulations of the Minister of Education. Model Schools are maintained at Cornwall, Durham, Kingston, Lindsay, Renfrew and North Bay. Teachers in Manitoba, in the non-professional or third class grade, must pass an examination in agriculture and elementary science.

IN OUR OWN COUNTRY.

Only two states in our own country claim to have means adequate to meet the demands for rural school training. These two are Rhode Island which has but one hundred and eighty-two ungraded schools, and California, where the normal schools and colleges furnish the necessary supply.

The normal schools and colleges of the several states cannot meet the demands of the urban schools for supervision and for special and grade teachers. Agricultural colleges are offering courses for those who wish to specialize in the teaching of farm and home economics and the extension work, as carried on in our own state, is arousing public sentiment in favor of better rural schools.

Teachers' institutes of from one to four weeks have long been used as promoters of teaching efficiency; but the shortness of the session and the academic character of the work limit their effectiveness. Some of the most recent methods of attacking this problem are worthy of our attention.

MODEL RURAL SCHOOLS AND RURAL SCHOOL EXTENSION.

STATE OF WASHINGTON. Mr. Showalter, who has charge of the department of rural schools of the State Normal School of Washington located at Cheney, is inaugurating a rural school revival by two methods. First, a model rural school within reach of the state normal school cadets, and second, rural school extension work. The following excerpt from a letter is of interest:

"Our Rural Training School is three miles in the country, and has all of the environments of typical rural schools. The children come from the neighboring homes and our work is organized under the same conditions that are required throughout the county and state. It is our aim to demonstrate just what improvements are possible to be made through proper organization, management and supervision. Through correlation and alternation, we reduce the number of recitations daily to a minimum and introduce into the curriculum Manual Training, Agriculture and Horticulture.

"It is our aim not only to train teachers well for this work, but to give them a natural adaptability for rural life and needs. Through our Directors' Meeting, we will also accomplish a strong co-operative spirit and a willingness to meet the demands for additional salary required for prepared teachers.

"Our Rural School extension work consists of demonstration and observation schools established in the different counties of eastern Washington for the purpose of giving an opportunity for teachers and directors to see the actual work in progress. This is done by and with the co-operation of the County Superintendent, and the Normal works jointly with him in giving out policies and plans.

"This year we have a large number of teachers who have chosen this work because of the attractive salaries offered, and the spirit and enthusiasm of the people in promoting its interests. Demonstration meetings and evening programs seem to have been very helpful to the patrons of the community, and we believe that through

this means that we shall be able to work out our plans quite completely and to obtain the results which we hope for in the re-organization of the country school."

The plan of conducting a model rural school in the vicinity of the normal school with special courses to meet the needs of country life is followed also by the Missouri State Normal at Kirksville, the Nebraska State Normal at Kearney, the Central State Normal of Michigan, the Indiana State Normal at Terre Haute, and the State Normal School at North Adams, Mass.

NORMAL TRAINING IN HIGH SCHOOLS.

IN NEBRASKA. In 1907 Nebraska passed a law for the purpose of giving normal training in approved high schools. The state superintendent prescribes the conditions, the course of instruction and the rules and regulations under the following limitations: The high school must be fully accredited, the normal training must be in the eleventh and twelfth grades, and the schools must have good library and laboratory facilities. The course of study includes an extensive review of the common school branches with special reference to the methods of teaching them, with at least seventy-two periods in professional training and one semester in American History. Agriculture is required and to secure the state aid a class of at least ten must be enrolled. The schools offering this elective work and securing the approval of the state department get \$500 direct aid.

About 100 high schools are now maintaining these courses and State Superintendent Bishop says that the work done by these schools has been satisfactory in the extreme. President Thomas of the Nebraska State Normal School at Kearney commends these schools as follows: "Most of the country schools are now supplied by students from the high schools. There are probably 2000 students in these normal training classes and most of them take up the work of teaching in the country"

IN MINNESOTA. A similar law has been passed by the State of Minnesota and twenty-seven high schools were approved last year, each receiving \$750 from the state. A special normal instructor must be employed. At the end of the course, the grades made in high school are certified to by the principal or superintendent and a

first or second grade certificate is issued to the graduate. Superintendent Schultz reports that other schools are applying for the state aid and that great reliance is being placed upon them for the training of rural school teachers.

IN KANSAS. The last legislature of the State of Kansas passed a bill giving state aid to high schools and academies maintaining normal training courses. Their number is limited by a \$50,000 annual appropriation; to local needs; and to their ability to maintain a fully accredited standing. Each school receives \$500 direct state aid denominational academies excepted. The State Board conducts examinations in May of each year and issues certificates to successful candidates valid for two years, renewable at the end of that time, and operative in any county of the state.

MICHIGAN AND NEW YORK. Plans similar to the ones already enumerated whereby normal training is maintained in high schools are in operation in Michigan and in New York. The latter state was the first to inaugurate the plan which was adopted seventy-three years ago. At present there are about one hundred of these classes. Each of these furnish from ten to twenty-five teachers a year to her rural schools. Over one-third of all rural school teachers in the state are holders of training class licenses to teach.

COUNTY TEACHERS' TRAINING SCHOOLS.

Wisconsin has adopted a plan whereby any county, wherein no normal is located, may establish a training school for teachers for the common schools. They are limited to twenty-six in number, twenty counties having already qualified under its provisions.

A board of three members is created, one of whom is the county superintendent of schools. Two-thirds of the amount expended for the maintenance of the school is paid by the state, not to exceed, however, thirty-five hundred dollars in any one school year. After completing the work of these training schools the graduate receives a third grade certificate good for two years. The length of the courses vary as to the age and strength of the school. Agriculture and manual arts are taught therein.

Superintendent Carey in his address before the Wisconsin State Teachers' Association in November, 1907, says that the county teachers' training school is the most effective plan for preparing

rural teachers which has yet been adopted in this country. It is doing much to arouse a better educational sentiment among the country people. It is effective because it is a separate institution, thereby dignifying it and the profession of teaching, and the teacher training is not a side issue as in high schools maintaining normal classes. It takes country boys and girls who know country conditions and who are in sympathy with country life and trains them to effectively carry on the work of the rural schools.

JUNIOR NORMAL AND SUMMER SCHOOLS

Louisiana maintains five state summer schools at strategic centers, running for a period of nine weeks each year. They render material aid to the training of teachers. A rural school inspector is employed to help in directing the work and in suggesting plans for the improvement of the country schools.

Nebraska, besides maintaining three state normal schools and providing for normal training in high schools, maintains eight Junior Normal Schools at designated centers, for the training of rural teachers. These were established by an act of the legislature in 1903 and have enrolled 8152 teachers-in-the-training since their organization. Tuition is free. The sessions last for eight weeks, all of the expenses thereof being met by the State. Their motto is "better trained and better paid teachers for better schools." Special stress is laid upon agriculture, hygiene and the common school studies.

MISCELLANEOUS AIDS

In various ways our states are attempting to solve the problem of greater adequacy and better training for the teachers of the rural schools. Illinois has a law admitting one scholarship student from each township into one of its normal schools, entitling the holder to free tuition and incidental expenses. It is conferred by the county superintendent upon the best pupil of the township, usually from the rural districts, and is valid for four years. The Western State Normal School at Macomb offers a special course for these students. Last year about 1000 scholarships were issued.

The State Department of Minnesota carries on a rural school extension work through its teachers' institutes and teachers' and pa-

trons' county conventions. The Department sends someone from the office, or bears the expenses of someone else whom it may designate, to discuss and to outline methods of improvement.

Missouri validates the grades made in summer schools maintained by approved independent colleges, selected by the State Board of Education. These grades are accepted in lieu of examination for certificates.

The State Normal School of Colorado offers a special training course for rural school teachers in the summer. The State Department issues extension leaflets each month, sending them to the rural schools. These bear upon nature study, hygiene, agriculture and horticulture.

CURRICULA.

Courses of study provided to meet the needs of rural school teachers vary in length. Training schools in Minnesota and Wisconsin accredit schools maintaining two or three years of secondary school studies with one year of professional training in addition thereto. The Standard training school is one maintaining a full four years' course of study, one year of which is given to professional study and teacher-training, with an especial stress upon intensive reviews in the elementary school studies and upon methods of teaching the same.

Farm and home economics are characteristic studies. Agriculture takes the place of botany as ordinarily studied. Hygiene and sanitation are given prominent places. Practical lessons in soils, animal industries and farm problems are substituted for the formal lessons in chemistry and zoology as commonly studied. Rural problems and life are discussed in such a way as to magnify and idealize country life and the possibilities of the country teacher.

CONDITIONS IN IOWA.

We have in Iowa 12,640 rural schools. On each September an army of about 3000 inexperienced, untrained beginners in teaching takes the places of those who have left the state or have changed, occupations. The majority of these are not in sympathy with country life. They are using the rural school as a means to get an experience which will gain them admission into a graded urban school.

They are unfamiliar with country school needs and of life values, and because of this they point students away from the farm.

Because the urban graded schools demand experienced teachers and pay higher wages than the country schools, the successful rural teacher, trained at the expense of the rural schools, abandons it for a more highly remunerative position.

Many rural schools are being abandoned, due to local conditions which draw pupils from the schools. If all the schools in Iowa having an average daily attendance of six or less were to be closed about 850 schools would close their doors. This shows that these schools are operating under a low educational tone and interest, and at too great an outlay for the cost of operation. Many of our counties have not enough teachers to meet their needs, and the absorption of these schools thru consolidation would save nearly a thousand teachers to the state.

Little improvement, comparatively, has been made in the character of the teaching in the rural schools in the last quarter of a century. Most of our attention has been directed toward the high schools and their accreditation. Their needs and the questions of college admission requirements have occupied the attention of schoolmen to the exclusion of the rural school and its problems.

Our state institutions and our accredited colleges cannot meet the demands made upon them by the city and town schools for professionally trained teachers. Our present needs for the graded schools alone, would require a normal school in each of the four corners of the state and still the rural school teacher problem would remain.

IOWA'S NEEDS.

Iowa needs the unification and wholesome correlation of all its educational forces; the conservation of all of the inherited elements of strength which past experience has given, and united effort in a forward movement for the most immediate and deserving object of our endeavor. These ends should be directed through a wise, unselfish and progressive State Department leadership which would take into consideration the needs of all our schools and put forth supreme effort to strengthen the most deserving point in our whole educational system—our rural schools. To meet these demands, the De-

partment should be supplied with better salaries and with means to carry on a rural school revival thru systematic extension work.

A movement for an increased interest in the work of our rural schools should be inaugurated. Without an intelligent understanding of its needs and an interest in its work among the common people, its patronage will be half-hearted and its work inferior. In other words, we should have a rural school campaign, a system of rural educational chautauquas to educate the people to an understanding of their own needs. There should be a stronger educational sentiment in our rural communities. And this awakening should enlist the enthusiastic co-operation of all classes of educational workers in our commonwealth. Without this unified, earnest endeavor, we cannot make the people believe in the possibilities of rural education.

The first concern of our state should be the improvement of her rural schools. They should have a course of study especially suited to their needs containing courses in farm and home economics. They need better equipment, better salaries for their teachers, better libraries and consolidation where advisable. They should have consolidated grammar and high schools for the advanced students, to be maintained for at least six months each year. They need closer supervision. But their supreme need is teachers, prepared and trained to carry on rural school work. To get teachers qualitatively and quantitatively adequate to meet present demands; to redirect and revitalize school activities; to idealize country life; to correlate home and farm economics with the common school studies; to establish a social and intellectual center for the uplift of the whole community; to raise new standards of life and of living; to open the mind and the heart to the possibilities for success and happiness upon the farm; to make the farmer boy and girl feel that God's-out-of-doors is good and that the greatest good may come from it,—the accomplishment of these possibilities rests with the teacher.

It does not seem advisable to start new schools for the training of teachers in Iowa. The most economical method is to provide for our needs by the utilization of those agencies already established. This immediate and worthy agency is our high schools. In 1905 Super-

intendent Riggs advised such a plan with the recommendation that the professional studies be given after the completion of the fully accredited secondary course. State aid to one four year school in each county, capable of maintaining a high standard of teaching efficiency, properly equipped with apparatus, library facilities and special teachers, in counties wherein no state educational institution already exists, would be money spent at points where the largest returns for the investment would be realized. The whole course should be planned to meet the demands of rural education and the last year given to an intensive review of the common school studies with reference to methods of presentation, together with professional studies and training work.

RECOMMENDATION

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE EDUCATIONAL COUNCIL

Your Committee recommends to the favorable consideration of your Legislative Committee the enactment of a law similar to those of our neighboring states, for the training of teachers thru the instrumentality of our high schools.

E. R. JACKSON	FRED MAHANNAH
GEO. H. BETTS	T. B. MORRIS
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